



2/7/23

The Town of West Hartford Leisure Services opposes HB6574.

### **IMPACT OF ACT**

The Town of West Hartford has a long history of offering safe and appealing summer day camp programs. The public flocks to our programs summer after summer. This summer 2022 included 61 full day camp weeks in five locations across town. Just a couple of years ago during the pandemic many municipalities, including West Hartford, stepped up and provided summer camp options during the Covid pandemic. While many private camps were shuttered. Proving the safety and attention to detail included in municipal operations.

The benefit vs cost of licensing requirements does not warrant a change. We anticipate that many residents will not be happy with higher fees and the need to submit full medical physicals, which will also come directly out of customer pockets. We currently apply many of the license measures in staff training and site amenities, our staff to camper ratios already exceed the state requirements, and staff is prepared to implement medication plans, as needed.

If the bill were to pass, it would be devastating to the customers of our programs. The cost of implementing the mandate would result in higher registrations fees or require taxpayer subsidies to cover the required additional staffing levels.

Safe camps is our top priority. Even with the volume of registrations and camps we offer, we have not experienced many safety complaints. The fact that customers return year after year is a testament to the level of trust the public has in our department to care for their children.

This mandate increases the level of paperwork needed for summer camp registration. In addition to full physical forms for each participant, licensure would require any individualized care plan be collected and sent to OEC for approval. Campers would be prohibited from attending camp until all approvals are received from State and staff trained to follow said plan. I do not feel that the majority of our customers feel that a full physical form from a physician has been necessary. In addition, the license requires all staff to submit physical forms that cost would fall directly on our staff.



To be clear, with funding to accommodate additional resources and additional staff, municipalities could comply with State Licensure. However, the impact on our customers is the most important issue here. We already hear from a few families that some of our programs are priced "too high". Unfortunately, many of the licensing requirements would drive the price up for all programs.

Municipalities have been exempt from licensing to allow us to keep costs affordable to many residents. Most private camps aim to make a profit, while municipal camps provide an essential service.

Other questions that need to be asked:

- Availability of quality Nurses and/or First Aid Coordinators in the state
- Staff levels at the state to manage increased inspections
- Demand on OEC to approve heightened number of Individualized care plans
- Demand on State to process thousands of background checks

Many municipalities, including West Hartford, will need to make hard choices on camp budgets. Higher costs and fewer options will likely be the result of this unfunded mandate. Unfortunately, some municipal programs would likely be cancelled or modified. A reduction in lower-cost camp options will squeeze families even more.

Sincerely,

Marc Blanchard

Leisure Services Manager